(b) if so, the steps being taken to improve LPG supplies; and

(c) the long term monitoring mechanism evolved to ensure that similar difficulties do not disrupt supplies in other parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) There was a marginal LPG backlog in the North-Eastern States during April-May, 1998 due to agitation resorted to by a section of employees of Indian Oil Corporation. As per the existing practice, officials of IOC were regularly coordinating and interacting with LPG distributors for restoring normalcy in supplies. Additional supplies were arranged from other plants of IOC(MD) and IOC(AOD) and Oil India, Duliajan and the backlog was cleared during May, 1998.

(c) Whenever LPG backlog develop due to law and order problems, industrial problems etc., oil companies take immediate measures to met the demand in the affected markets by operation of LPG bottling plants during extended hours and on Sundays and holidays and arranging supplies from nearby bottling plants, to clear the LPG backlog.

Oil pool deficit

1765. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the oil pool deficit at the end of April, 1998;

(b) the factors responsible for oil pool deficit;

(c) whether Government propose to operationalise a contingency plan to reduce the oil pool deficit; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (d) The cumulative outstandings of the oil companies as on 30.6.97 were estimated to be Rs. 18,271 crore. The pool account got adversely affected during 1996-97 due to steep increase in the prices of the crude oil & petroleum products in the international market, decline in indigenous production of crude oil, Rupee-Dollar exchange rate variation, increase in the Rail freight and changes in the Customs & Excise duty announced in the Finance Bill for 1996-97. The Government in September, 97 have decided that the outstandings of the oil companies from OCC would be taken over by the Government by issue of Special Government Bonds. The oil companies have been issued Special Government Bonds of Rs. 12,984 crore effective 2.3.98. The Government had also decided that pricing of major petroleum products including HSD will be fixed on principles of import parity. The Government have initiated the phased programme for dismantling of Administered Pricing Mechanism and the pricing of petroleum products like Naphtha, FO, LSHS, Bitumen, Paraffin-wax etc. have been decontrolled w.e.f. 1.4.98. The system of retention pricing for all the refineries has been abolished. Cost plus formula for indigenous crude oil producers and shipping of crude oil has been withdrawn.

कांडला—भटिंडा पाइपलाइन से तेल की चोरी

1766. **श्री राघवजी:** क्या पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि कांडला-भटिण्डा तेल पाइपलाइन में से कई जगह छेद करके तेल की चोरी किये जाने की घटनाएं प्रकाश में आई हैं;

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है और इससे कुल कितनी क्षति होने का अनुमान है; और

(ग) तेल चोरी की उपरोक्त घटनाओं की रोकथाम के लिये क्या कदम उठाए जा रहे हैं?